June 26, 2015

California Department of Water Resources
Urban Water Use Efficiency Unit
ATTN: Julie Saare-Edmonds, Senior Environmental Scientist
P.O. Box 942836
Sacramento, CA 94236-0001
Email: Julie.Saare-Edmonds@water.ca.gov

Re: 2015 MWELO Update

Dear Ms. Sarre-Edmonds:

I am a landscape architect at Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT) in San Francisco. I would like to offer the below comments in regard to the proposed 2015 MWELO update.

1) I and WRT strongly support the goal of increasing water-efficiency in landscapes in California. The below comments focus on my disagreements with the proposed changes, however I do want to state that I support most of the revisions not mentioned below.

2) I believe that the relative impact of the proposed changes to the MWELO on overall water-use will be minimal. The existing MWELO has already done a great deal to conserve water in landscape projects. I strongly encourage and support efforts directed at improving *existing* water-wasting landscapes through planting and irrigation redesign and retrofitting. The MWELO revisions should not be seen as an adequate response to the drought, nor should they distract State agencies, including the DWR, from implementing policies directed at existing irrigated landscapes.

3) The proposed requirement of a 1-inch-per-hour maximum precipitation rate should be deleted from the MWELO. A 1-inch-per-hour maximum would prohibit use of the vast majority of spray irrigation technologies currently available on the market. There are legitimate uses for spray irrigation, and it is far from certain that these are less efficient in all applications than drip or microspray systems. For example, spray irrigation is recommended in stormwater-management bioretention planting areas (such as required by C.3 regulations in the Bay Area). These contain sandy soils with high infiltration rates, where drip or microspray systems do not wet the soil thoroughly enough to support the plants. Rather, intermittent, shallow spray irrigation is recommended for these types of soils. In fact, drip or micro-spray systems are *less* efficient in these soils, since the water does not get to the roots of the plants, and instead goes directly into the storm drain.

Many of our clients are public agencies, and many of the landscapes we design are public, high-use landscapes where the owner's ability to maintain drip systems is limited. In these applications, a

properly designed and managed irrigation system that includes spray may be able to meet the water-efficiency requirements of the MWELO.

The goal of the maximum precipitation rate should be stated in performance-based terms, not prescriptively. If the goal is to limit or eliminate runoff, then the MWELO should explicitly state that goal and allow landscape architects and irrigation designers to find the best solutions to meet that goal given the specific conditions of the project, including plant type, soil type, microclimatic factors, maintenance capacity of the owner, etc.

4) The irrigation efficiency requirement must be technically possible to achieve. It is not clear that the proposed requirements are.

5) For larger landscape projects that are designed by professional landscape and irrigation designers, the MWELO should be performance-based, rather than prescriptive. Let the designers and irrigation-technology developers come up with the solutions that meet the performance goals and requirements.

6) Regarding small landscapes, I would like to echo the June 19 public-hearing comments from representatives of the Bay Friendly Landscaping program, who spoke about the need for easy-to-understand prescriptive regulations for small landscapes. If the MWELO is to apply to projects as small as 500 square feet, a simple prescriptive ordinance should be drafted to apply only to those smaller landscapes, with an option to meet the performance-based requirements by other means. The applicability to landscapes as small as 500 square feet raises concerns about implementability and enforceability. Simplifying the code as it applies to small landscapes might be a solution.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft revisions to the MWELO.

Sincerely,

Jacob S Tobias
Landcape Architect

JST:jst